# S. 233

To place a moratorium on executions by the Federal Government and urge the States to do the same, while a National Commission on the Death Penalty reviews the fairness of the imposition of the death penalty.

### IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

January 31, 2001

Mr. Feingold (for himself, and Mr. Levin, Mr. Wellstone, and Mr. Corzine) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

## A BILL

To place a moratorium on executions by the Federal Government and urge the States to do the same, while a National Commission on the Death Penalty reviews the fairness of the imposition of the death penalty.

- 1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
- 2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
- 3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
- 4 This Act may be cited as the "National Death Pen-
- 5 alty Moratorium Act of 2001".

# 1 TITLE I—MORATORIUM ON THE 2 DEATH PENALTY

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<b>ጎ</b>	SEC.	101.	FIND	INGS.

4 Congress makes the following findings:

#### (1) General findings.—

- (A) The administration of the death penalty by the Federal government and the States should be consistent with our Nation's fundamental principles of fairness, justice, equality, and due process.
- (B) At a time when Federal executions are scheduled to recommence, Congress should consider that more than ever Americans are questioning the use of the death penalty and calling for assurances that it be fairly applied. Support for the death penalty has dropped to the lowest level in 19 years. An NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll revealed that 63 percent of Americans support a suspension of executions until questions of fairness can be addressed.
- (C) Documented unfairness in the Federal system requires Congress to act and suspend Federal executions. Additionally, substantial evidence of unfairness throughout death penalty

1	States justifies further investigation by Con-
2	gress.
3	(2) Administration of the death penalty
4	BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.—
5	(A) The fairness of the administration of
6	the Federal death penalty has recently come
7	under serious scrutiny, specifically raising ques-
8	tions of racial and geographic disparities:
9	(i) Eighty percent of Federal death
10	row inmates are members of minority
11	groups.
12	(ii) A report released by the Depart-
13	ment of Justice on September 12, 2000,
14	found that 80 percent of defendants who
15	were charged with death-eligible offenses
16	under Federal law and whose cases were
17	submitted by the United States attorneys
18	under the Department's death penalty de-
19	cision-making procedures were African
20	American, Hispanic American, or members
21	of other minority groups.
22	(iii) The Department of Justice report
23	shows that United States attorneys in only
24	5 of 94 Federal districts—1 each in Vir-
25	ginia, Maryland, Puerto Rico, and 2 in

1	New York—submit 40 percent of all cases
2	in which the death penalty is considered.
3	(iv) The Department of Justice report
4	shows that United States attorneys who
5	have frequently recommended seeking the
6	death penalty are often from States with a
7	high number of executions under State
8	law, including Texas, Virginia, and Mis-
9	souri.
10	(v) The Department of Justice report
11	shows that white defendants are more like-
12	ly than black defendants to negotiate plea
13	bargains saving them from the death pen-
14	alty in Federal cases.
15	(vi) A study conducted by the House
16	Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Con-
17	stitutional Rights in 1994 concluded that
18	89 percent of defendants selected for cap-
19	ital prosecution under the Anti-Drug
20	Abuse Act of 1988 were either African
21	American or Hispanic American.
22	(vii) The National Institute of Justice
23	has already set into motion a comprehen-
24	sive study of these racial and geographic
25	disparities.

1	(viii) Federal executions should not
2	proceed until these disparities are fully
3	studied, discussed, and the federal death
4	penalty process is subjected to necessary
5	remedial action.
6	(B) In addition to racial and geographic
7	disparities in the administration of the federal
8	death penalty, other serious questions exist
9	about the fairness and reliability of federal
10	death penalty prosecutions:
11	(i) Federal prosecutors rely heavily on
12	bargained-for testimony from accomplices
13	of the capital defendant, which is often ob-
14	tained in exchange for not seeking the
15	death penalty against the accomplices.
16	This practice creates a serious risk of false
17	testimony.
18	(ii) Federal prosecutors are not re-
19	quired to provide discovery sufficiently
20	ahead of trial to permit the defense to be
21	prepared to use this information effectively
22	in defending their clients.
23	(iii) The Federal Bureau of Investiga-
24	tion (FBI), in increasing isolation from the
25	rest of the nation's law enforcement agen-

1	cies, refuses to make electronic recordings
2	of interrogations that produce confessions,
3	thus making subsequent scrutiny of the le-
4	gality and reliability of such interrogations
5	more difficult.
6	(iv) Federal prosecutors rely heavily
7	on predictions of "future dangerous-
8	ness"—predictions deemed unreliable and
9	misleading by the American Psychiatric
10	Association and the American Psycho-
11	logical Association—to secure death sen-
12	tences.
13	(3) Administration of the death penalty
14	BY THE STATES.—
15	(A) The punishment of death carries an
16	especially heavy burden to be free from arbi-
17	trariness and discrimination. The Supreme
18	Court has held that "super due process", a
19	higher standard than that applied in regular
20	criminal trials, is necessary to meet constitu-
21	tional requirements. There is significant evi-
22	dence that States are not providing this height-
23	ened level of due process. For example:
24	(i) In the most comprehensive review
25	of modern death sentencing, Professor

James Liebman and researchers at Columbia University found that, during the period 1973 to 1995, 68 percent of all death penalty cases reviewed were overturned due to serious constitutional errors. In the wake of the Liebman study, 6 States (Arizona, Maryland, North Carolina, Illinois, Indiana, and Nebraska), as well as the Chicago Tribune and the Texas Defender Service are conducting additional studies. These studies may expose additional problems. With few exceptions, the rate of error was consistent across all death penalty States.

- (ii) Forty percent of the cases overturned were reversed in Federal court after having been upheld by the States.
- (B) The high rate of error throughout all death penalty jurisdictions suggests that there is a grave risk that innocent persons may have been, or will likely be, wrongfully executed. Although the Supreme Court has never conclusively addressed the issue of whether executing an innocent person would in and of itself violate the Constitution, in Herrara v. Collins, 506

U.S. 390 (1993), a majority of the court expressed the view that a persuasive demonstration of actual innocence would violate substantive due process rendering imposition of a death sentence unconstitutional. In any event, the wrongful conviction and sentencing of a person to death is a serious concern for many Americans. For example:

- (i) After 13 innocent people were released from Illinois death row in the same period that the State had executed 12 people, on January 31, 2000, Governor George Ryan of Illinois imposed a moratorium on executions until he could be "sure with moral certainty that no innocent man or woman is facing a lethal injection, no one will meet that fate".
- (ii) Since 1973, 93 persons have been freed and exonerated from death rows across the country, most after serving lengthy sentences.
- (C) Wrongful convictions create a serious public safety problem because the true killer is still at large, while the innocent person languishes in prison.

- 1 (D) There are many systemic problems
  2 that result in innocent people being convicted
  3 such as mistaken identification, reliance on jail4 house informants, reliance on faulty forensic
  5 testing and no access to reliable DNA testing.
  6 For example:
  - (i) A study of cases of innocent people who were later exonerated, conducted by attorneys Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld with "The Innocence Project" at Cardozo Law School, showed that mistaken identifications of eyewitnesses or victims contributed to 84 percent of the wrongful convictions.
  - (ii) Many persons on death row were convicted prior to 1994 and did not receive the benefit of modern DNA testing. At least 10 individuals sentenced to death have been exonerated through post-conviction DNA testing, some within days of execution. Yet in spite of the current widespread prevalence and availability of DNA testing, many States have procedural barriers blocking introduction of post-conviction DNA testing. More than 30 States

1 have laws that require a motion for a new 2 trial based on newly discovered evidence to 3 be filed within 6 months or less. (iii) The widespread use of jailhouse snitches who earn reduced charges or sentences by fabricating "admissions" by fel-6 7 low inmates to unsolved crimes can lead to 8 wrongful convictions. 9 (iv) The misuse of forensic evidence 10 can lead to wrongful convictions. A re-11 cently released report from the Texas De-12 fender Service entitled "A State of Denial: 13 Texas and the Death Penalty" found 160 14 cases of official forensic misconduct includ-15 ing 121 cases where expert psychiatrists testified "with absolute certainty that the 16 17 defendant would be a danger in the fu-18 ture", often without even interviewing the 19 defendant. 20 (E) The sixth amendment to the Constitu-21 tion guarantees all accused persons access to 22 competent counsel. The Supreme Court set out 23

standards for determining competency in the

case of Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668

(1984). Unfortunately, there is unequal access

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1	to competent counsel throughout death penalty
2	States. For example:
3	(i) Ninety percent of capital defend-
4	ants cannot afford to hire their own attor-
5	ney.
6	(ii) Fewer than one-quarter of the 38
7	death penalty States have set any stand-
8	ards for competency of counsel and in
9	those few States, these standards were set
10	only recently. In most States, any person
11	who passes a bar examination, even if that
12	attorney has never represented a client in
13	any type of case, may represent a client in
14	a death penalty case.
15	(iii) Thirty-seven percent of capital
16	cases were reversed because of ineffective
17	assistance of counsel, according to the Co-
18	lumbia study.
19	(iv) The recent Texas report noted
20	problems with Texas defense attorneys who
21	slept through capital trials, ignored obvious
22	exculpatory evidence, suffered discipline for
23	ethical lapses or for being under the influ-
24	ence of drugs or alcohol while representing

an indigent capital defendant at trial.

1	(v) Poor lawyering was also cited by
2	Governor Ryan in Illinois as a basis for a
3	moratorium. More than half of all capital
4	defendants there were represented by law-
5	yers who were later disciplined or dis-
6	barred for unethical conduct.

(F) The Supreme Court has held that it is a violation of the eighth amendment to impose the death penalty in a manner that is arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory. McKlesky v. Kemp, 481 U.S. 279 (1987). Studies consistently indicate racial disparity in the application of the death penalty both for the defendants and the victims. The death penalty is disparately applied in various regions throughout the country, suggesting arbitrary administration of the death penalty based on where the prosecution takes place. For example:

(i) Of the 85 executions in the year 2000, 51 percent of the defendants were white, 40 percent were black, 7 percent were Latino and 2 percent Native American. Of the victims in the underlying murder, 76 percent were white, 18 percent were black, 2 percent were Latino, and 3

percent were "other". These figures show a continuing trend since reinstatement of the modern death penalty of a predominance of white victims' cases. Despite the fact that nationally whites and blacks are victims of murder in approximately equal numbers, 83 percent of the victims involved in capital cases overall since reinstatement, and 76 percent of the victims in 2000, have been white. Since this disparity is confirmed in studies that control for similar crimes by defendants with similar backgrounds, it implies that white victims are considered more valuable in the criminal justice system.

(ii) Executions are conducted predominately in southern States. Ninety percent of all executions in 2000 were conducted in the south. Only 3 States outside the south, Arizona, California, and Missouri, conducted an execution in 2000. Texas accounted for almost as many executions as all the remaining States combined.

#### SEC. 102. FEDERAL AND STATE DEATH PENALTY MORATO-

- 2 RIUM.
- 3 (a) In General.—The Federal Government shall
- 4 not carry out any sentence of death imposed under Fed-
- 5 eral law until the Congress considers the final findings and
- 6 recommendations of the National Commission on the
- 7 Death Penalty in the report submitted under section
- 8 202(c)(2) and the Congress enacts legislation repealing
- 9 this section and implements or rejects the guidelines and
- 10 procedures recommended by the Commission.
- 11 (b) Sense of Congress.—It is the sense of Con-
- 12 gress that each State that authorizes the use of the death
- 13 penalty should enact a moratorium on executions to allow
- 14 time to review whether the administration of the death
- 15 penalty by that State is consistent with constitutional re-
- 16 quirements of fairness, justice, equality, and due process.

### 17 TITLE II—NATIONAL COMMIS-

- 18 SION ON THE DEATH PEN-
- 19 **ALTY**
- 20 SEC. 201. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.
- 21 (a) Establishment.—There is established a com-
- 22 mission to be known as the National Commission on the
- 23 Death Penalty (in this title referred to as the "Commis-
- 24 sion").
- 25 (b) Membership.—

1	(1) Appointment.—Members of the Commis-
2	sion shall be appointed by the President in consulta-
3	tion with the Attorney General and the Chairmen
4	and Ranking Members of the Committees on the Ju-
5	diciary of the House of Representatives and the Sen-
6	ate.
7	(2) Composition.—The Commission shall be
8	composed of 15 members, of whom—
9	(A) 3 members shall be Federal or State
10	prosecutors;
11	(B) 3 members shall be attorneys experi-
12	enced in capital defense;
13	(C) 2 members shall be current or former
14	Federal or State judges;
15	(D) 2 members shall be current or former
16	Federal or State law enforcement officials; and
17	(E) 5 members shall be individuals from
18	the public or private sector who have knowledge
19	or expertise, whether by experience or training,
20	in matters to be studied by the Commission,
21	which may include—
22	(i) officers or employees of the Fed-
23	eral Government or State or local govern-
24	ments;

1	(ii) members of academia, nonprofit
2	organizations, the religious community, or
3	industry; and
4	(iii) other interested individuals.
5	(3) Balanced viewpoints.—In appointing the
6	members of the Commission, the President shall, to
7	the maximum extent practicable, ensure that the
8	membership of the Commission is fairly balanced
9	with respect to the opinions of the members of the
10	Commission regarding support for or opposition to
11	the use of the death penalty.
12	(4) Date.—The appointments of the initial
13	members of the Commission shall be made not later
14	than 30 days after the date of enactment of this
15	Act.
16	(c) Period of Appointment.—Each member shall
17	be appointed for the life of the Commission.
18	(d) Vacancies.—A vacancy in the Commission shall
19	not affect the powers of the Commission, but shall be filled
20	in the same manner as the original appointment.
21	(e) Initial Meeting.—Not later than 30 days after
22	all initial members of the Commission have been ap-
23	pointed, the Commission shall hold the first meeting.
24	(f) Meetings.—The Commission shall meet at the
25	call of the Chairperson.

(g) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the

2	Commission shall constitute a quorum for conducting
3	business, but a lesser number of members may hold hear-
4	ings.
5	(h) Chair.—The President shall designate 1 member
6	appointed under subsection (a) to serve as the Chair of
7	the Commission.
8	(i) Rules and Procedures.—The Commission
9	shall adopt rules and procedures to govern the proceedings
10	of the Commission.
11	SEC. 202. DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.
12	(a) Study.—
13	(1) In general.—The Commission shall con-
14	duct a thorough study of all matters relating to the
15	administration of the death penalty to determine
16	whether the administration of the death penalty
17	comports with constitutional principles and require-
18	ments of fairness, justice, equality, and due process.
19	(2) Matters studied.—The matters studied
20	by the Commission shall include the following:
21	(A) Racial disparities in capital charging,
22	prosecuting, and sentencing decisions.
23	(B) Disproportionality in capital charging,
24	prosecuting, and sentencing decisions based on
25	geographic location and income status of de-

- fendants or any other factor resulting in such disproportionality.
  - (C) Adequacy of representation of capital defendants, including consideration of the American Bar Association "Guidelines for the Appointment and Performance of Counsel in Death Penalty Cases" (adopted February 1989) and American Bar Association policies that are intended to encourage competency of counsel in capital cases (adopted February 1979, February 1988, February 1990, and August 1996).
  - (D) Whether innocent persons have been sentenced to death and the reasons these wrongful convictions have occurred.
  - (E) Whether the Federal Government should seek the death penalty in a State with no death penalty.
  - (F) Whether courts are adequately exercising independent judgment on the merits of constitutional claims in State post-conviction and Federal habeas corpus proceedings.
  - (G) Whether mentally retarded persons and persons who were under the age of 18 at the time of their offenses should be sentenced

1	to death after conviction of death-eligible of-
2	fenses.
3	(H) Procedures to ensure that persons sen-
4	tenced to death have access to forensic evidence
5	and modern testing of forensic evidence, includ-
6	ing DNA testing, when modern testing could
7	result in new evidence of innocence.
8	(I) Any other law or procedure to ensure
9	that death penalty cases are administered fairly
10	and impartially, in accordance with the Con-
11	stitution.
12	(b) Guidelines and Procedures.—
13	(1) In general.—Based on the study con-
14	ducted under subsection (a), the Commission shall
15	establish guidelines and procedures for the adminis-
16	tration of the death penalty consistent with para-
17	graph (2).
18	(2) Intent of Guidelines and Proce-
19	DURES.—The guidelines and procedures required by
20	this subsection shall—
21	(A) ensure that the death penalty cases are
22	administered fairly and impartially, in accord-
23	ance with due process;
24	(B) minimize the risk that innocent per-
25	sons may be executed; and

- 1 (C) ensure that the death penalty is not 2 administered in a racially discriminatory man-3 ner. 4 (c) Report.— (1) Preliminary Report.—Not later than 1 6 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the 7 Commission shall submit to the President, the Attor-8 ney General, and the Congress a preliminary report, 9 which shall contain a preliminary statement of find-
- 11 (2) Final Report.—Not later than 2 years 12 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commis-13 sion shall submit a report to the President, the At-14 torney General, and the Congress which shall con-15 tain a detailed statement of the findings and conclu-16 sions of the Commission, together with the rec-17 ommendations of the Commission for legislation and 18 administrative actions that implement the guidelines 19 and procedures that the Commission considers ap-20 propriate.

#### 21 SEC. 203. POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.

ings and conclusions.

- 22 (a) Information From Federal and State
- 23 AGENCIES.—

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24 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may secure 25 directly from any Federal or State department or

- agency information that the Commission considers
  necessary to carry out the provisions of this title.
- 3 (2) FURNISHING OF INFORMATION.—Upon a 4 request of the Chairperson of the Commission, the 5 head of any Federal or State department or agency 6 shall furnish the information requested by the Chair-7 person to the Commission.
- 8 (b) Postal Services.—The Commission may use
  9 the United States mails in the same manner and under
  10 the same conditions as other departments and agencies of
  11 the Federal Government.
- 12 (c) GIFTS.—The Commission may accept, use, and 13 dispose of gifts or donations of services or property.
- 14 (d) Hearings.—The Commission or, at the direction 15 of the Commission, any subcommittee or member of the 16 Commission, may, for the purpose of carrying out the pro-17 visions of this title—
- 18 (1) hold hearings, sit and act at times and 19 places, take testimony, receive evidence, and admin-20 ister oaths that the Commission, subcommittee, or 21 member considers advisable; and
- 22 (2) require, by subpoena or otherwise, the at-23 tendance and testimony of witnesses and the produc-24 tion of books, records, correspondence, memoranda, 25 papers, documents, tapes, and materials that the

1	Commission, subcommittee, or member considers ad-
2	visable.
3	(e) Issuance and Enforcement of Sub-
4	POENAS.—
5	(1) Issuance.—Subpoenas issued pursuant to
6	subsection (d)—
7	(A) shall bear the signature of the Chair-
8	person of the Commission; and
9	(B) shall be served by any person or class
10	of persons designated by the Chairperson for
11	that purpose.
12	(2) Enforcement.—
13	(A) IN GENERAL.—In the case of contu-
14	macy or failure to obey a subpoena issued
15	under subsection (d), the district court of the
16	United States for the judicial district in which
17	the subpoenaed person resides, is served, or
18	may be found, may issue an order requiring
19	that person to appear at any designated place
20	to testify or to produce documentary or other
21	evidence.
22	(B) Contempt.—Any failure to obey a
23	court order issued under subparagraph (A) may
24	be punished by the court as a contempt.

1 (3) Testimony of Persons in Custody.—A 2 court of the United States within the jurisdiction in 3 which testimony of a person held in custody is sought by the Commission or within the jurisdiction 5 of which such person is held in custody, may, upon 6 application by the Attorney General, issue a writ of 7 habeas corpus ad testificandum requiring the custo-8 dian to produce such person before the Commission, 9 or before a member of the Commission or a member 10 of the staff of the Commission designated by the 11 Commission for such purpose.

#### (f) WITNESS ALLOWANCES AND FEES.—

- (1) In General.—The provisions of section 1821 of title 28, United States Code, shall apply to witnesses requested or subpoenaed to appear at any hearing of the Commission.
- 17 (2) Travel expenses.—The per diem and mileage allowances for witnesses shall be paid from funds available to pay the expenses of the Commission.

#### 21 SEC. 204. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.

- 22 (a) Compensation of Members.—Members of the
- 23 Commission shall serve without compensation for the serv-
- 24 ices of the member to the Commission.

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- 1 (b) Travel Expenses.—The members of the Com-
- 2 mission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per
- 3 diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employ-
- 4 ees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title
- 5 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or
- 6 regular places of business in the performance of services
- 7 for the Commission.
- 8 (c) Staff.—
- 9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Chairperson of the
- 10 Commission may, without regard to the civil service
- laws and regulations, appoint and terminate an exec-
- 12 utive director and such other additional personnel as
- may be necessary to enable the Commission to per-
- form the duties of the Commission.
- 15 (2) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—The employment
- of an executive director shall be subject to confirma-
- tion by the Commission.
- 18 (3) Compensation.—The Chairperson of the
- Commission may fix the compensation of the execu-
- 20 tive director and other personnel without regard to
- 21 the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of
- chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating
- to classification of positions and General Schedule
- pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the execu-
- 25 tive director and other personnel may not exceed the

- 1 rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule
- 2 under section 5316 of title 5.
- 3 (d) Detail of Government Employees.—Any
- 4 Federal Government employee may be detailed to the
- 5 Commission without reimbursement, and the detail shall
- 6 be without interruption or loss of civil service status or
- 7 privilege.
- 8 (e) Procurement of Temporary and Intermit-
- 9 TENT SERVICES.—The Chairperson of the Commission
- 10 may procure temporary and intermittent services under
- 11 section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates
- 12 for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent
- 13 of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of
- 14 the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5.
- 15 SEC. 205. TERMINATION OF THE COMMISSION.
- The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the
- 17 date on which the Commission submits its report under
- 18 section 202.
- 19 **SEC. 206. FUNDING.**
- 20 (a) In General.—The Commission may expend an
- 21 amount not to exceed \$850,000, as provided by subsection
- 22 (b), to carry out this title.

- 1 (b) AVAILABILITY.—Sums appropriated to the De-
- 2 partment of Justice shall be made available to carry out

3 this title.

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